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*MONISM, PLURALISM, AND PERSONALISM*

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Two philosophical conceptions of God are now contesting the field with the theology of Christianity—Monism and Pluralism. It will be the endeavor of this paper to show that neither of them offers so rational, adequate, and comprehensive a conception of God as does Christianity, for the reason that neither is so true to that category which is coming to be more and more clearly recognized as the supreme interpretation of deity, namely, personality.

## I.

Monism, if it is to successfully differentiate itself from pantheism, must show its consonance with personality. That has long been its recognized and accepted task. The history of philosophy since Kant has been largely occupied with a prolonged and varied attempt to bring personality into harmony with a monistic interpretation of the universe. Fichte attempted it, and reached a universal will or life, spiritual, and inclusive of other finite realities, but which could hardly be called personal.<sup>1</sup> Schelling tried it, and came out with an impersonal absolute. Then came Hegel, and, advancing to a new and vital conception, endeavored to demonstrate the personality of the absolute by showing that the whole process of cosmic and human development is a consciousness process, and that this consciousness must be one and personal.

The crucial and much disputed question concerning Hegel's philosophy is whether his all-embracing, all-enfolding absolute is personal or impersonal. Professor Seth emphatically denies

<sup>1</sup> "I abhor all religious conceptions which personify God, and regard them as unworthy of a reasonable being," said Fichte, although by this he probably meant personify in the sense of anthropomorphize.

personality to Hegel's Absolute.<sup>2</sup> Dr. McTaggart takes the same view; basing his definition of personality upon self-consciousness—the ability to say “I am”—he affirms his belief that “Hegel did not himself regard the Absolute as personal.”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Professor Calkins seems to regard Hegel as teaching the personality of the Self: “The absolute self, differentiated, Hegel teaches, into the rich variety of the world of nature and of limited spirit, is no lifeless or abstract thought, but concrete self. ‘The highest, extremest, summit,’ as he says, ‘is pure Personality, which alone—through that absolute dialectic which is its nature—encloses and holds all within itself.’”<sup>4</sup> But although Hegel thus expressly attaches the term personality to the absolute, it will not do, in view of his habitual freedom in the use of terms, to take his own word for it. His system as a whole makes it impossible to conceive of the absolute as in any true sense personal.

Aside from Dr. McTaggart's contention that Hegel's absolute is not personal because it is not completely self-conscious, the decisive issue lies not so much at that point as in the ethical incompetency for personality of a being who confounds good and evil. Hegel's absolute is not personal, because it is not moral. A pure personality might possibly be conceived as adventuring into unconsciousness in order to attain to a higher consciousness, but not as adventuring into evil in search of a higher good. Of this, our own pursuit of personality assures us incontestably. It is true that in his personal development a man may, through his very sin, his very self-apostasy, come in the end circuitously to that point in spiritual progress which he might have reached in the straight line of moral integrity, yet it is not because of his sin but in spite of it.

It is very easy to confuse condition and cause. A man's sin may be the condition of his salvation; it is never the cause of it. *O beata culpa!* is a natural cry from a redeemed self, but it means only that in the joy of redemption the light of the new life shines backward, and suffuses even the sinister act of apostasy, which

<sup>2</sup> Hegelianism and Personality.

<sup>3</sup> Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> The Persistent Problems of Philosophy, p. 388.

the soul nevertheless knows to have been, in itself, wholly and solely injurious and bad. Because the self can, with the aid of the higher self, recover its lost birthright, let us not suppose that the selling of the birthright was the means of its recovery.

There is only one way to explain moral evil adequately, and that is as the act of finite freedom—a freedom so essential to personality that without it a human being could not be a person. But although sin is a free act, each act of evil, instead of being a step forward in the progress of personality, is a step backward. If, in exerting itself sufficiently to recover this lost ground, the self attains new strength of selfhood, shall we attribute the gain to the backward step, or to the act of self-recovery? If it be replied that it was the backward step that made possible the self-recovery, the answer is that it simply determined the form of the self-exertion which, better directed, might have resulted in still greater advance.

We do not rightly estimate moral evil except when we perceive it as, in itself, purely, wholly hateful, hostile, and destructive. It may be so involved with other motives and with conditions that make for good that, confused with its accompaniments, it seems good, but *per se* it is not mere absence of good, much less good in disguise, but the implacable foe of good. Only as we recognize it as such can we overcome it, and get good by overcoming. Itself can never be changed into good; its overcoming works us inexpressible good.

It is of course conceivable that God may be one like ourselves, pressing on stumblingly, haltingly, toward self-realization; committing not simply mistakes but sins; knowing good yet doing evil; self-directive yet self-defeating. Such a God, containing within himself all human persons, might be a person in the making, as we are, but he could not be a complete person. He would need an infinite person to account for him. For imperfect personality requires perfect personality. There can be in the realm of the moral, the personal, no imperfect except as there is a perfect. In the realm of the impersonal this principle does not hold, because the impersonal gets its ideal element only from the personal realm. There may be imperfect islands, yet no perfect island; imperfect houses, yet no perfect

house; but there cannot be imperfect persons and no perfect person. I may have the idea of a perfect island without its actually existing; but I cannot have the idea of a perfect person without his existence, because he exists, not in the realm of the actual, that is the physical, at all, but only in the realm of the ideal, the eternal.<sup>5</sup> In so far as I, as a person, belong to that ideal order, I am in direct relation to him, the perfect person, just as, as a physical being, I am in direct relation to the race.

Not only does Hegel's monism thus contradict divine personality, it takes away much of the meaning and reality from human personality. It is indeed a high prerogative to be a part of the absolute self, a moment in the universal process of the divine self-realization; but if one has no choice in the matter, no power to the contrary, is there after all much significance in the part he plays? What is left of human personality, with autonomy gone and responsibility shattered? Hegel was too much absorbed in the great areas and wide inclusions of a comprehensive system to be much concerned with the interest of the separate self. Lost in a vast movement, subordinated to a mighty process, the individual human self was left to take such inventory of its diminished greatness as it might.

This indifference to human personality on the part of Hegelianism could not continue. Neo-Hegelianism awoke to the necessity of finding a worthier and better defined place for the human self, and this has been its most distinctive task. Most noteworthy in this direction is the philosophy of Professor Royce, who has gone further in his study of human selfhood, in the attempt to reconcile personality and monism, than any other writer. In *The Conception of God*, *The World and the Individual*, and *Studies of Good and Evil*, Professor Royce has attacked this problem from every angle, and pursued it with remarkable penetration and perseverance. The result is a contribution to philosophy of the greatest wealth and value.

The human self, Professor Royce defines as "a meaning embodied in a conscious life, present as a relative whole within

<sup>5</sup> The ontological argument, that is, in the true form is valid; but we are not dependent upon it for our knowledge of the existence of God. That comes through personal recognition.

the unity of the Absolute life."<sup>6</sup> To this relative whole within the absolute Professor Royce attributes what he regards as a real freedom, namely the freedom of expressing a unique and worthwhile meaning: "What we see, however, is that every distinguishable portion of the divine life, in addition to all the universal ties which link it to the whole, expresses its own meaning."<sup>7</sup> Again: "I alone, amongst all the different beings of the universe, will this act. That it is true that God here also wills in me, is indeed the unquestionable result of the unity of the divine consciousness. But it is equally true that this divine unity is here and now realized by me, and by me only, through my unique act. My act, too, is a part of the divine life that, however fragmentary, is not elsewhere repeated in the divine consciousness. When I thus consciously and uniquely will, it is I then who just here *am* God's will, or who just here consciously act for the whole. I then am so far free."<sup>8</sup>

Little exception need be taken to this description of the human will in its moral activity, when acting harmoniously with the divine will; but what of its immoral activity, its resistance of the Good Will? Here also is uniqueness of meaning, but a bad uniqueness, the uniqueness of opposition that implies another sort of freedom, a freedom of choice and self-direction. And indeed, with a super-Hegelian sensitiveness to moral distinctions, Professor Royce distinctly recognizes the reality of moral evil, and virtually admits the real freedom from which it issues: "There is the possibility and the fact of a finite and conscious resistance of the will of the World by the will of the Individual. The consequences of this resistance are real evils—evils that all finite beings and the whole world suffer."<sup>9</sup> But with this recognition of the freedom of opposition, what becomes of the theory? With each finite self thus made a centre of free choices and self-direction, the possibility of a God consisting of the totality of finite selves vanishes. The further Professor Royce goes in his analysis of the self, the clearer it becomes that his monism is out of keeping with his ethics. "A Self whose eternal perfection is attained through the totality of these ethically significant tempo-

<sup>6</sup> The World and the Individual, II, 268.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. I, 466.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. I, 468.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. II, 398.

ral strivings, these processes of evolution, these linked activities of finite Selves,"<sup>10</sup> cannot be reconciled with a human freedom sufficient to account for the active opposition and potency of existing evil. The temporal strivings of finite selves gain their ethical significance only in relation to a perfect will with which they strive to come into harmony, even as he strives to have them do.

God must be a distinct person, above as well as within the selves, perfect where they are imperfect, whole while they are fragmentary, true while they are erring, in order to be a completely personal God. If he attains his perfection only through their strivings—strivings in which they manifest not only imperfection but anti-perfection—perfection is no longer an eternal existence, but an empirical process, and thereby loses its very reality. Perfection as it pertains to finite selves is an empirical process, but as it pertains to the infinite self an eternal, inexhaustible fulness. It is a striking evidence of the extravagant application of the category of development that the divine author of it should himself be made subject to it. The incongruity is especially marked, in that development has no meaning in the ethical realm except as there is an ideal of perfection toward which the development moves. How can "development," "becoming," have any meaning except as there is a Perfect One above the process, transcending it, explaining it? Such an One there cannot be, if monism be true.

## II.

If monism is an inadequate account of personality, are we then driven to pluralism, as a necessary alternative? If by pluralism is meant its current form the answer is, No. Current pluralism breaks up the absolute of monism into a fixed number of distinct though intimately related persons or selves, whose unity either itself constitutes the only deity, or of which God is a constituent member.

Strictly speaking, there are three types of present-day pluralism, which may be characterized as Theistic Pluralism, Atheistic Pluralism, and Pragmatistic Pluralism. Passing the first for the

<sup>10</sup> *The World and the Individual*, II, 419.

moment, we find in the atheistic pluralism of Dr. McTaggart an interesting instance of Hegelian monism passing over completely into its logical outcome. 'If,' reasons Dr. McTaggart as a consistent Hegelian, 'we have only an absolute composed of finite selves, then the plurality of these selves is quite as distinct a fact as their unity; and their unity is at best an impersonal unity in which there is no place for a personal God, or indeed for any God at all, in the proper sense of the term.' The second type, pragmatistic pluralism, is an individualistic pluralism. It will have a God or gods, if such are useful; but it is not quite certain as yet whether it is worth while to keep one or more of these beings in existence or not.

The theistic pluralism, or personal idealism, of Professor Howison stands by itself in its pronounced theism, and presents the clearest, strongest, and most convincing argument for the existence of God advanced by modern philosophy. Based on the nature of personality itself, it shows that the existence of God is inseparably bound up with that of the community of finite persons, each of whom, "though indeed defining himself against each of his fellows, must define himself primarily against the Supreme Instance, and so in terms of God. Thus each of them, in the very act of defining his own reality, defines and posits God as real—as the one Unchangeable Ideal who is the indispensable standard upon which the reality of each is measured. The price at which alone his reality as self-defining can be had is the self-defining reality of God. If he is real, then God is real; if God is not real then neither can he be real."<sup>11</sup>

This is a most satisfactory statement of the rational principle involved in that immediate recognition of God which is the basis of religion. But unfortunately Professor Howison stops short of the full implications of his theism. Instead of going forward to the rational inference which the religious consciousness has universally drawn, that human, imperfect personality finds its ground and source in this Perfect Person, Professor Howison, in his laudable effort to discredit the theory of mechanical creation, ignores the ontological dependence of the finite and imperfect upon the infinite and perfect, and places the human selves upon

<sup>11</sup> *The Limits of Evolution*, second edition, p. 355.



the same level, as respects self-existence and self-origination, with God.

Thus every form of pluralism, including Professor Howison's personal idealism, fails to meet the full requirements of personality. The source of this deficiency is in the failure of pluralism to recognize immanence, just as monism fails to recognize transcendence. Pluralism is so taken up with plurality, it is so sensitive to the distinctness and autonomy of each separate self, that it fails to take due note of that intimacy of relationship by which finite selves enter into each other (each preserving still his own centre of self-hood) and dwell in each other, while the Supreme Self enters and dwells in all.

Since we are obliged to use spatial terms of spiritual relations, it is truer to say that we are within than without one another, so intimately are we related to each other. Especially is it true—and the only adequate truth—to say of the Perfect Person that he is in us, and we in him. Otherwise we have, in our relations with one another, an isolation that cannot possibly constitute a society (except after the fashion of a "social contract"), and in our relations with God a remoteness that cannot possibly constitute a unity.

### III.

The failure of monism to co-ordinate with personality is due to its recognition of immanence only; that of pluralism to its recognition of transcendence only.<sup>12</sup> Finality can never be reached until these two truths—transcendence and immanence—are seen to be complementary, until the circle of a true inclusiveness sweeps about them both and holds them in polar unity. This Christianity, rightly understood, does, and does by means of the fulfilling and correcting truth of personality. That which fulfils also corrects. God is neither the sum of all existence, nor a separate unitary individual, but an immanent yet transcendent person.

Personality is the only reality that can be both immanent and

<sup>12</sup> Transcendence and immanence are here used in the common, if not altogether appropriate, sense of "the doctrine that God in his proper and essential nature is prior to and above the world, or that he has reality in himself apart from his works," and "the indwelling or inworking of the Deity in nature and man." See Baldwin, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*.

transcendent. As force, God could be immanent only. As unitary, unrelated being, he could be transcendent only. But as person he is both immanent and transcendent.

To perceive how transcendence and immanence both belong to personality, we have but to turn to our own selves and our activities and relations. Imperfect though we may be as persons, as respects time and space we are both immanent and transcendent. I am immanent in my body, informing it and directing it, yet I also transcend it, and though I am limited by it, yet am I lord of it. Far indeed are we from being bound by space, although we cannot wholly escape it. We are at the same time spatial and non-spatial, dwelling in the two worlds like a bird between sky and tree-top. As a physical being I occupy space; am near or far from others; must move swiftly or slowly to get from place to place. But as person, as soul, I occupy no space whatever, no not so much as a pin-point. I think, move, feel, superspatially. My moral life, which is my truest life, is lived not in space at all.

So, too, as respects time. On one side of our being we are time-creatures, hindered and circumscribed by time limitations; able to do "but one thing at a time"; having a fixed place in a time-series; serving as a hireling our day. But in another sphere of our being, as persons, we are above time, look down upon it, transcend it. *In* time we are, but not *of* time. In the momentous decisions and experiences of the soul, slow years of ordinary living are swept into swift seconds. Time loses significance in the life of the spirit. Our association, as persons, with time is only part of that complication of ours with the empirical order which constitutes the tragedy of our present existence. The first thing for the Ego to learn is that it does not belong to this empirical order. Then it may go on to discover how to master and use it.

When one has once grasped the truth that as persons we are supertemporal and superspatial, he has the key to many of the most closely-locked problems of existence. Because as persons we are thus supertemporal and superspatial we cannot be mortal. Death, which shatters all our temporal relations and all our spatial relations, cannot shatter ourselves. And for the same

reason our relations to one another cannot be comprised in, or defined by, time and space. As supertemporal we are not, as persons, limited to today or tomorrow in our relations with one another. And as superspatial we are not, strictly speaking, external to one another, impenetrable, impervious, apart. No, our personal uniqueness consists not in the impenetrability of each person, as if he were an objective existence, a thing; but in that personal unity and self-consciousness by which he remains forever a distinguishable, inconfusable self. The personal monads, if we use Leibnitz' symbol, are not windowless. We are indivisible, not because of any peculiar adhesiveness, but because, as selves, we are not material beings at all. In whatever relations he may be, a self is always a whole by virtue of his selfhood.

In the very freedom and transcendence of personal relations, then, lies the possibility of immanence. The term itself is, of course, but a symbolism. The truth for which it stands is that the relations of persons to one another are too intimate to be expressed in terms of externality. We are—to repeat—rather within than without one another in our most vital personal relations.<sup>13</sup> And yet this immanence does not impair our personal integrity and unity; these can suffer impairment only by our own free act. The very word by which we most commonly designate our mutual personal relations, "influence," bears the same implication. Indeed no term that falls short of this suffices. We flow into one another, we dwell in one another—not in any material sense, but in the vital activities of our personal relationships.

The doctrine of the immanence of God is but a larger interpretation and application of the limited immanence which we know in our human relationships. If my friend can be, as it were, *in* me by virtue of the reality and power of his personality in my life, and yet without impairing my personality, then surely God, by virtue of whose personality my personality exists, can be in me without such impairment. I am not less real that he is in

<sup>13</sup> "There is nothing that can come closer, nothing that can penetrate a person more than another person. Bodies and objects are insuperably exterior to one another; not so persons." Gaston Frommel, *Études morales et religieuses*, p. 358 (quoted in *The Expository Times*, December, 1907, p. 111).

me, but more real; not less free, but more free. For it is only as a social self, in the most intimate and active relations with other persons, that my personality can develop. And no intimacy can be so purifying and liberating and fructifying as that with the Supreme Person. There is no difficulty in the idea of immanence if it be personally and not spatially conceived. "If the fact of God's omnipresence is conceded, this immanence of the Perfect within the imperfect as the Soul of the soul is *eo ipso* implied."<sup>14</sup>

God is immanent in universal humanity. Without him no one could be, even potentially, a person. And yet he is not immanent in all in the same manner and degree. That depends upon the capacity, receptiveness, and response of each separate person; and that in turn upon many factors, some of which lie quite beyond our vision. Enough that each human person shares in that universal divine immanence. Not as though God were divisible, and so much of him, less or more, inserted in each human soul. Rather, as the all-penetrating light radiates from the one quenchless sun, flooding the spacious chamber with splendor and stealing subtly into the narrow and shadowed room, so the Eternal Light richly illumines the great soul that lies open and expansive to his beams, nor fails also to suffuse with all possible radiance the enclosed and ill-advantaged soul whose walls may yet expand to admit more light.

#### IV.

Nature offers to the divine indwelling a medium far less capacious than humanity, yet far more open and plastic. Love, truth, and grace, nature cannot embody; only beauty, power, and harmony. Yet these are personal, not impersonal, attributes. They are in sky and mountain and flower, not because of mere form and proportion and color, but because in form and proportion and color hides the mind of a personal God.

Here, again, we gain our best understanding of the divine immanence by the analogy of our own immanence. A person paints a picture, or composes a sonata, or writes a poem, or builds a house, and in the very process inevitably puts himself

<sup>14</sup> W. R. Boyce Gibson, *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1907, p. 44.

into it. In some subtle way the quality and flavor of his personality pervades it. It is his, whether he own it or not. One knows instantly an angel of Angelico or a sketch of Rembrandt or a statue of Michael Angelo or a line of Shakespeare. More marvellous than the fabled touch of Midas is this touch of personality upon the outward world. Yet not *completely* plastic is the material, for the very reason that it is something less than spiritual. Pigment, marble, language—how each at once serves personality, and at the same time thwarts it; invites and denies; expresses and limits! The artist now soars, now chafes; now seizes, now fails. Here, see his meaning gleam pure and splendid through line or stone or syllable; there, hide and halt beneath that very medium which but now embodied it.

Is not such the relation of what we call nature to the Supreme Personality? With a wealth of variety and adaptation it responds to his informing Spirit. And yet nature cannot be a perfect medium of the Divine Spirit, simply because it is nature and not spirit. It will not do to identify the two. It is very true that nature has no meaning, no existence even, without mind; but that does not make it identical with mind. There is a natural and there is a spiritual; there is matter and there is spirit. To break down the distinction between them is to bring confusion and disaster into thought and into life. Not all, but *in* all, is God. And not in all in the same way and the same degree. It is part of our great human training to find him in the outer world, to detect, to perceive, to understand. Verily our God is a God who hides himself; yet hides himself only that he may more graciously reveal himself. For where there is no concealing there is no search, and where there is no search there is no finding. To get at the kernel within the husk, the meaning within the symbol, the essence within the embodiment—that is to find God in nature. There is a fine suggestion of the true nature of the divine immanence in the Bhagavadgita:<sup>15</sup>—

There is nothing else, O Danangaya! higher than myself; all this is woven upon me, like numbers of pearls upon a thread. I am the taste in water, O son of Kunti! I am the light of the sun and moon. I am "Om" in all the Vedas, sound in space, and manliness in human beings; I am the

<sup>15</sup> Sacred Books of the East, VIII, 74.

fragrant smell in the earth, refulgence in the fire; I am life in all beings and penance in those who perform penance. Know me, O son of Pritha! to be the eternal seed of all beings, I am the discernment of the discerning ones, and I the glory of the glorious.

If the pantheism of India had gone no farther than this, the results would not have been so serious. Not to lose bearings in this great sea of truth, but to sail it in the light of the stars that shine above—that is the difficult task in which India so dismally failed, and in which Christianity has thus far succeeded. If Paul describes God as “in all,” he couples it with “over all.” If the author of the Fourth Gospel teaches as the very substratum of his gospel the divine indwelling in creation, it is as the Logos, not as the complete Godhead. If Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria find the very essence of Christianity in the immanence of God in man, their Christology saves them from pantheism. If Athanasius, with his training in Platonism, finds the universe full of God, he never identifies him with it. “For not even by being in the universe does he share in its nature, but all things, on the contrary, are quickened and sustained by him.”<sup>16</sup> Saint Augustine, whose conceptions closely border upon pantheism, escapes it by his doctrine of creation *de nihilo*.<sup>17</sup> Mysticism dwelt close to the lotus-land of pantheism, but seldom ventured too far within. John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, declares that “those scattered rays of beauty and loveliness which we behold spread up and down over all the world, are only the emanations of that *inexhaustible light which is above*.”<sup>18</sup> And Wordsworth, in the most familiar and endeared expression in literature of the divine immanence in nature, clearly and completely differentiates himself from pantheism by describing God as the being, *not* who *is* the light of setting suns, but *whose dwelling* is the light of setting suns

And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Thus does the Christian conception exult in the divine immanence without thereby losing the transcendence.

<sup>16</sup> De incarnations, § 17.

<sup>17</sup> Weber, History of Philosophy, p. 189.

<sup>18</sup> See Caldecott, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 189.

## V.

The endeavor on the part of Christianity to harmonize and unify immanence and transcendence finds its historical expression in the doctrine of the Trinity. In spite of its controversial and ecclesiastical character, the Nicene formula was an earnest and profound effort to define the nature of divine personality. And the most significant fact regarding it is that both the problem and its solution grew inevitably and naturally out of the problem of the personality of Christ. It seems a far cry from the simplicity and sincerity of Jesus Christ—the most real, and in a sense the best understood, man who ever lived—to the fathomless speculations of the Athanasian controversy; and yet the whole process lay enwrapped in the answer of Peter to the question of his Lord, “Whom say ye that I, the Son of Man, am?” From the personality of Jesus to the personality of God is a straight and unavoidable path.

When men undertook thus, for the first time, to define God in the light of personality, it became clear that in some way he must needs be conceived both as transcendent and as immanent. Retaining, therefore, the well-established Hebrew conception of transcendence—“God, the Father Almighty”—they complemented and fulfilled it with the Christian form of the conception of immanence—“and in Jesus Christ the Son of God, only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God.” Here is the nucleus of the doctrine of a personal God who is at once transcendent and immanent, absolute and revealing, perfect and imparting. Not that the Nicene doctrine was complete and final, either in statement or in conception. It was but a germinal and inadequate, yet inestimably important, grasping of a truth whose larger significance is only now opening before us. The Nicene doctrine itself suffered serious deterioration and distortion in the barren interpretation of Augustinianism and Calvinism, and is only now coming to true appreciation and development in the New Athanasianism of modern theology. The immanent Logos, which Athanasius found in the only-begotten Son alone, has now come to be recognized in all men, yet without lessening, but rather heighten-

ing, the unparalleled significance of him who alone can rightly be called *the* Incarnate One, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

There is another way in which the doctrine of the Trinity stands for, and helps to maintain, the truth of the divine personality. That is by setting personality, as applied to God, over against individuality. Perhaps three men out of four confuse personality with individuality. For this reason, when God is spoken of as a person, many a thoughtful man or woman will reply, 'I cannot think of God as a person; to me he is far too great, too universal, to be a person, like ourselves.' And all the time the speaker is thinking of a person simply as an individual. Of course God is not an individual; that is just what perfect personality makes it impossible for him to be. The qualities of pure personality, such as in ourselves, as imperfect persons, are associated with individuality, in a perfect person must transcend individuality. Moreover, it is that very perfection of personality that, so to speak, individualizes God, that distinguishes him from everything and everyone else.

The trinitarian doctrine endeavors to represent this perfection of personality, this fulness of being, by refusing to God stark numerical unity, standing as that does for individuality, and substituting for it a threefold unity, far more adequate to express the richness, the love, the glory, the inexhaustible fulness, of the Perfect Person.

Thus does Christianity conserve and defend the reality of a perfect person. All the reality, the intensity, the pervasiveness, of a God who is through all and in all is retained, without the extravagances and moral blindnesses of pantheism. Immanence, personally conceived, finds its true interpretation in relation to that transcendence by means of which moral relationships and values are preserved and the universe is seen as one in which God dwells but is not absorbed.